

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PAINTINGS AND PRINTS FROM THE KELVIN
SMITH COLLECTION AT CLEVELAND MUSEUM

A special display of the vigorous, popular Japanese art style of Ukiyo-e is now open to the public at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The exhibition is made up of paintings and prints from the collection of Mr. Kelvin Smith of Cleveland and also includes some works from the Museum's own collection.

Ukiyo-e ("floating world") painting flourished in the Edo period from 1600 to 1868. It represents the extraordinary development in Japan of an art renaissance based on broadly popular foundations instead of the earlier traditions which insisted on standards and subject matter approved by the aristocracy and the priesthood.

The word ukiyo meant "this fleeting, floating world" and is interpreted to characterize the newly-evolving atmosphere of stylish pursuit of pleasure, easy women, rake-hell actors.

The style was described in Tales of The Floating World by Asai Ryoi around 1661 as "...Living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves, singing songs, drinking wine, and diverting ourselves just in floating, floating, caring not a whit for the pauperism staring us in the face, refusing to be disheartened, like a gourd floating along with the

river current: this is what we call the floating world."

The pictures in Gallery 29 amply justify Ryo'i's description.

Representing the earlier style is an anonymous 16/17th century painting,

Figure of a Woman, probably depicting one of the gaily dressed courtesans of the day. Similarly from the 19th century, Kawanabe Kyosai has portrayed an elaborately dressed lady in his painting Beauty Before a Screen -- no doubt in homage to one of the popular beauties of his time.

Complementing the floating world paintings are several ceramic pieces and, to be displayed shortly, twenty prints by celebrated artists of the period from Harunobu and Utamaro to Hokusai and Hiroshige.

The exhibition will remain on view until September 2.

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